

The Story

Photos by Matthew J. Thomas, PH2 Donn  McKissic and PHAN Darryl I. Wood
Composite by Allan Amen

“Hey, where are we going?”

away

By Lt. Steve Ready

was a nugget on my first cruise, reading Approach and saying things like, “Can you believe this bozo?” and “I would never do something that stupid.” Little did I know I had just placed a curse on myself.

Later that day, I briefed with my JO crew and walked for our mission-tanking flight off the coast of Australia. I looked forward to getting airborne, having a productive flight, and honing my skills behind the boat.

My War Hoover crew and I settled in our seats and started engines. The forces of evil seemed to be mounted against us because our flight-control system failed its post-start check. I shut down the No. 2 engine and watched our maintainers work furiously to solve the problem. At the same time, the air boss politely inquired whether we were up or down. Since we were parked in his landing area (LA), he needed us to taxi clear or launch. Unfortunately, it didn’t look like our electrician’s hard work was going to fix the problem in time to make the launch, so we cried “uncle” and told the boss we were down.

With the pressure of the impending recovery building, the handler wanted to save time by having us start No.2 and taxi out of the LA instead of shutting down and getting a tow. The rest of the crew already had exited the jet, which left just me and the rightseater. I gave the signal to shut the door, started the No.2 engine, and armed our seats for the trek up the flight deck. After our plane captain handed us off to the yel-


lowshirt, we began taxiing to the LA, and I suddenly felt a strange tap on my shoulder. I could see my buddy’s hands were folded neatly in his lap, so I was a little confused.

“Hey, where are we going?” said the muffled voice of a maintainer. He was staring at me with a look that said, “You are so stupid,” and “Wow, this is an interesting view of the flight deck,” all in the same expression.

I calmly replied, “To cat 1. Better sit down and get ready for the ride of your life.” Ha ha, hee hee, hmmm, errrr—so much for my aspirations as a big time, stand-up comic. He was not amused; go figure.

Taxiing around the flight deck with maintenance personnel (who aren’t qualified or equipped to fly) in a jet with ejection seats that are armed and dangerous is never a good idea. My rightseater and I quickly safed our seats, told the maintainer to sit down, and decided to continue taxiing since we were near our new tie-down spot.

Ah, the lessons we learn from our mistakes. This is the big lesson learned here: Always check that the tunnel is clear, my Viking brethren, before giving the signal to shut the door. Simple enough, and something that I now do religiously.

It is better to learn from other people’s mistakes than committing our own variations of the same. Therefore, I won’t be offended when some nugget on his first cruise reads this and quips, “Can you believe this bozo? I would never do something that stupid.” 

Lt. Ready flies with VS-38.